



Success Story

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: January 14, 2005
Release Number: PR AL 05-15

Contact: Karen Cook (205) 290-7101 ext 227
Internet Address: <http://www.sba.gov/al/>

GADSDEN GOURMET TEWANA & COMPANY, INC. BAKES HER WAY TO SUCCESS

When you have the urge for gourmet muffins and espresso coffee and you live in Gadsden, Alabama, where do you go? Your first thought is probably New York. Save the plane fare! All you have to do is go to 529 Broad Street in Gadsden to Tewana & Co., Inc. Tewana and David Croy started this business in April 1993, and it has grown to become a fixture for gourmet offerings in the historic downtown Gadsden business district.

As one of five girls, Tewana and her sisters grew up under the tutelage of their mother, Dot Garrett, who is noted for her cooking ability. From there, she expanded into cooking for friends and relatives. That experience helped her land positions in the restaurant industry during young adulthood. She is still dedicated to her family and seeks their advice and involvement in her everyday life. The way she runs the business is no exception. Her sister, Pam Chastain, is the business manager and her mother is chief cook. Tewana's God-given abilities and entrepreneurial drive led her from the kitchen in her home to catering and eventually to a full service restaurant.

As the business evolved, Tewana's entrepreneurial resolve strengthened. She and David remodeled a dilapidated apothecary in downtown Gadsden, Alabama, and made it into the fine facility that it is today. Tewana and Co. Inc., is the home of a gourmet bakery, coffee and chocolate gift shop, delicatessen, high end catering, an elegant eating room. Their bakery and product lines are now in seven local groceries. They also have gourmet Swiss chocolate lines in nine gourmet gift shops within the States of Alabama and Georgia.

Over time, growth of the business rendered the top floor inadequate to serve all customers. Stairs were installed and a new downstairs dining area opened. The centerpiece of this expansion is the "Mary Frances Meeting Room," an area designed and decorated for rental for personal dinner parties and other special occasions.

As the business evolved, Tewana saw the need to develop a plan to anticipate and address the changes that were occurring. She realized that this was something that she could not do on her own so she went to the Jacksonville State University Small Business Development Center (JSU SBDC) to get assistance with these issues. The SBDC helped the company to

establish a business plan and uncover ways to make the business more profitable.

Insisting that her products, service, and staff are second to none has earned the business a strong reputation. However, attention to detail often has a price. The expectations of Tewana & Co., Inc. are above average and, since this type of quality is expensive, the company must be very careful to control finances and cost of goods sold. According to Tewana, the assistance her company received, from the U. S. Small Business Administration funded JSU SBDC, has allowed them to work smarter and not harder by finding ways to save without cutting corners or reducing quality. She said that JSU SBDC has “been most helpful in pointing us in the right direction and warning us of potential danger zones for new and expanding businesses.”

#

For more information about all of the SBA's programs for small businesses, visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov.